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ED 017 208 FL 000 640

PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF TEACHING A SECOND LANGUAGE--A FIVE-YEAR REPORT ON THE MLA-CAL-TFC FILM SERIES ON TEACHER EDUCATION.

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PUB DATE 27 DEC 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.56 12P.

DESCRIPTORS- *TEACHER EDUCATION, *MODERN LANGUAGES, *INSTRUCTIONAL FILMS, *TEACHING METHODS, *INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT, AUDIOLINGUAL METHODS, LANGUAGE TEACHERS, APPLIED LINGUISTICS, FILM PRODUCTION, LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION, PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS, SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING, ENGLISH (SECOND LANGUAGE), CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS, MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION, TEACHING FILM CUSTODIANS,

WRITTEN FIVE YEARS AFTER THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION, CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS, AND TEACHING FILMS CUSTODIANS HAD PRODUCED JOINTLY THEIR FILM SERIES ON SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING PRINCIPLES AND METHODS, THIS REPORT DETAILS SIGNIFICANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION, OUTLINES BRIEFLY THE FEATURES OF THE FILMS, AND SUMMARIZES THEIR USE. AFTER DESCRIBING QUITE EXTENSIVELY THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE LINGUISTS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AUDIOLINGUAL ORIENTATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING, THE ACCOUNT DISCUSSES ATTEMPTS MADE, THROUGH THE FILM MEDIUM, TO BRING TOGETHER THE WORK OF LINGUISTS AND LANGUAGE TEACHERS. NOTES ON PREPARATORY DETAILS, ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS, AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THE PRODUCTION OF THE FILMS PRECEDE A DESCRIPTION OF THE SERIES IN GENERAL AND OF EACH OF THE FILMS. THE CONCLUDING PORTION REPORTS ON THE WORLDWIDE DISTRIBUTION AND USE OF THE SERIES AND GIVES PURCHASE AND RENTAL INFORMATION. THIS SPEECH WAS DELIVERED AT THE ACTFL ANNUAL MEETING, CHICAGO, DECEMBER 27, 1967. (AB)

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"Principles and Methods of Teaching a Second Language": A Five-Year Report on the MLA-CAL-TFC Film Series on Teacher Education

By Donald D. Walsh

This report should begin by explaining the initials in its subtitle. The MLA is the Modern Language Association of America, whose Foreign Language Program, initiated in 1952 with aid from the Rockefeller Foundation, has done a good deal to revitalize and dignify foreign-language teaching in America. The CAL is the Center for Applied Linguistics, established under MLA auspices in 1959 with aid from the Ford Foundation and concerning itself especially with the study of non-Western-European languages, with the teaching of English to speakers of other languages, and with the application of the findings of linguistic science to the teaching of all languages. TFC is Teaching Film Custodians, established in 1938 under the auspices of the Motion Picture Association of America. TFC is a non-profit corporation interested in spreading and improving the use of films in education. These three organizations combined forces to produce a series of five films that have considerably expedited the current revolution in the learning of foreign languages. You note that I have not said "modern foreign languages." The films and the revolution apply to the teaching of all foreign languages; in fact, some of the most revolutionary and pioneering materials in this field were prepared by Waldo Sweet of the University of Michigan for use in the teaching of Latin.

Some background information about applied linguistics may be in order. Linguistics is a relatively new science, which developed as a

branch of anthropology and as a means of putting in some kind of written and transferable code hundreds of languages for which no written transcription existed, languages of Africa, Asia, and the Americas. With tape recorders and transcribing codes linguists studied endless samples of native speech and gradually came to learn the sound system of each language and its syntax. In doing this, they had to be objective and they had to rely on speech because their only source of information was what their informants said. They didn't know what they ought to have said, only what they did say. The science of linguistics that developed, then, was descriptive, not prescriptive. The language was what its speakers spoke. The linguists were learning from the speakers, not teaching them. To the linguist anything that a native speaker said was correct and it was a piece in the puzzle that he was engaged in solving. And the linguists did solve the puzzles and they wrote basic descriptions of the sound systems and the grammars of hundreds of languages that had never before been codified, some of them with only a few remaining speakers at whose death the language would have disappeared from human knowledge without a trace.

Because of their insistence on describing as accurately as possible what they heard, these linguists came to be known as descriptive linguists. And they were interested exclusively and for many years in the so-called "primitive" languages of so-called "primitive" peoples. Actually, as we become more sophisticated linguistically, we know that there are no primitive peoples and that they do not speak primitive languages; indeed, some of the languages have extraordinarily complicated and subtle distinctions that do not exist in any of our Western-European languages.

The descriptive linguists were anthropologists in the field, or rather in the jungle and the desert, and their research and its results seemed to have little to do with language teaching in the classroom. The linguist was a pure scientist and he cared nothing about any practical application of his scientific findings. But the Second World War changed that attitude somewhat. There was a frantic need for crash programs in Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Russian, and linguists were called in to plan courses and write manuals for the ASTP, the Army Specialized Training Program, which gave United States servicemen quick, intensive courses in these and other languages, including French and German. The linguists worked for the government under the auspices of the ACLS, the American Council of Learned Societies, and produced a whole series of basic texts and recordings, from Spoken Arabic through Spoken Yoruba, texts that were later made available to the educational community by Henry Holt and Company. The texts were planned for courses with native informants, linguistic analysts, small classes, a great number of contact hours, and limitless drilling of utterances. All this instruction could be carried out under the special conditions available to the armed forces, but it proved to be impossible to duplicate these conditions as part of a school or college teaching environment, once the war was over and the linguists returned to their research in the field.

The linguists were next called upon to produce manuals for the teaching of English to speakers of other languages, because the existing grammars for teaching English to native speakers of English were quite worthless for this purpose. The first need here is to give the foreigner a control over English that will approximate a child's control over his

native language before he first goes to school, and of course all that is omitted from the traditional grammar books, which take it all for granted and devote themselves to correcting natural speech and analyzing it and conjugating it as though it were Latin or Greek: "I speak, you speak, he, she, or it speaks, we speak, you speak, they speak."

The traditional rule, for example, says that to make a sentence interrogative, it is necessary to invert the subject and predicate. It is? We have to do this? We can't just change the tune? Not a word about this in the grammars. Pity the poor foreigner trying to learn English out of a book. And when he finally does learn a little about interrogative inflection, there is nothing in the book to tell him that "Why we can't just change the tune?" doesn't work as well as "We can't just change the tune?". Note, incidentally, that the intonational patterns are different: "Why we can't just change the tune?" versus "We can't just change the tune?". A linguistically sophisticated rule would be that a statement can be made into a yes-no question by a mere change in intonation, but that if the question begins with an interrogative word (who, what, which, when, why) standard speech requires inversion of subject and verb: "Why can't we just change the tune?".

Intonational patterns are complex and important in English and they are very perplexing to foreigners trying to learn the language. Consider the variations in word stress in a simple question: What are we having for dinner, mother? <u>What</u> are we having for dinner, mother? What <u>are</u> we having for dinner, mother? What are <u>we</u> having for dinner, mother? What are we having for <u>dinner</u>, mother? and What are we having for dinner, <u>mother</u>?

Consider, too, the importance of juncture, the pause between syllables or words, called close juncture if it is minimal, as in "nitrate," the acid, or open juncture if it is a longer pause, as in "night rate," the cheap way to send telegrams. Or contrast "White House," where the President lives, with "white house," a house of a certain color, not to mention "the White house," where the Whites live. Another contrast is between the "lighthouse keeper's daughter," whose father tends the lighthouse, and the "light housekeeper's daughter," whose mother does light housekeeping.

In all this linguistic analysis, the emphasis has been on speech. The language is speech. A language is a language even if it has no written form. Spoken languages developed long before written languages and they are and have always been dominant. Indeed, to learn even a so-called dead language effectively, we must try to reconstruct how it was spoken, or to invent some kind of sound system to enable us to mouth its words. Let us remember that there is no such thing as silent reading. Even when we read familiar and easy material in our native language, there is a slight vocalizing of what we read. And as the material increases in difficulty, there is an increase in the vocalizing. So we may be sure that most foreign-language reading has a fairly high degree of this vocalizing. And if we're going to vocalize what we read, why not attempt to vocalize the way the native speakers do?

I began by saying that linguists were first interested in the exotic languages that had no written forms and that they were next

persuaded to turn to a scientific description of English as an aid to teaching it to speakers of other languages. Finally--at long last--they began to interest themselves in scientific descriptions of the languages that were being widely studied in American schools: French, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish. The Modern Language Association, from the inception of its FL Program, was eager to bring together linguists and language teachers. This was not easy to achieve, because most descriptive linguists were totally uninterested in any practical application of their findings, and most language teachers were puzzled and antagonized by the jargon in which the linguists described their work.

It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words, and a motion picture should be worth several thousand. In 1959 Teaching Film Custodians made arrangements with Twentieth-Century-Fox to make available its weekly newsreels in five foreign languages (French, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish) as an aid to foreign-language learning in American schools and colleges. The MLA FL Program lent its enthusiastic support to this venture and sample newsreels were shown at the December 1959 annual meeting of the Association. Out of this experience came exploratory conferences between Stanley McIntosh, Executive Director of TFC, and George Winchester Stone, Jr., then Executive Secretary and now President of the MLA, on the need for a series of films on language-learning techniques in order to show new teachers (and most old teachers) how the knowledge acquired by descriptive linguists could be applied to classroom language teaching.

Charles A. Ferguson, Director of the MLA Center for Applied Linguistics, was keenly interested in the project, and he and Theodore Karp, a writer who had done a series of motion picture scripts on the teaching of English as a foreign language, joined the conferences. Since the films would probably have at first only a restricted market, it was anticipated that no commercial film producer would risk capital investment in the project and that it should therefore be financed jointly by the MLA, the CAL, and TFC. TFC contributed $80,000 in the summer of 1960, the largest grant it had ever made for any single project.[1] Agreements between the MLA and TFC stipulated that TFC would assist in the planning of the series but that the actual production would be made by a private film producer working under contract with the MLA. TFC would undertake to administer the world-wide sale and rental of the completed series. Mr. Karp would prepare the scripts and supervise the production of the series with the advice of a national committee of linguists and language teachers to be named by the MLA. They were Charles A. Ferguson, then Director of the CAL and now Chairman of the Department of Linguistics at Stanford University, Emma Birkmaier, Professor of Education at the University of Minnesota, Simon Belasco, Professor of Romance Languages at Pennsylvania State University, Nelson Brooks, Professor of French at Yale University, John B. Carroll, then Professor of Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and now Director of Research for Educational Testing Service, Roy Fallis, Foreign Service Institute, Charles C. Fries, Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Michigan and former Director of its English Language Institute, J. R. Frith,

Foreign Service Institute, Albert H. Marckwardt, then Professor of English and Director of the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan and now Professor of English and Linguistics at Princeton University, Stanley McIntosh, Teaching Film Custodians, Ainslie B. Minor, U. S. Information Agency, Lawrence Poston, Jr., Professor of Modern Languages at the University of Oklahoma, Henry Lee Smith, Jr., Professor of Linguistics and English and Chairman of the Department of Linguistics and Anthropology at New York State University at Buffalo, Gerald F. Winfield, Agency for International Development, and I, who was then Director of the Foreign Language Program of the MLA and am now Secretary-Treasurer of the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Consultants for the series were Pauline Rojas, an authority on the teaching of English to native speakers of Spanish, and Howard Sollenberger, Director of the Foreign Service Institute of the Department of State.

The contract for producing the film series was given to the Reid H. Ray Film Industries of St. Paul, Minnesota. Production was begun in 1960 and completed in 1963. Sequences were filmed at the Demonstration School of the University of Minnesota, at the Georgetown University Institute of Languages and Linguistics, and in several classes in Puerto Rican schools.

The overall title of the series, "Principles and Methods of Teaching a Second Language," indicates its nature. It is not intended to teach any one language, but to show how any language can and should be learned. Examples of good teaching are drawn from English, French, German, Spanish,

and other languages. Each film is in black and white and runs for about thirty minutes.

The first film, "The Nature of Language and How it is Learned," emphasizes the primacy of speech and reveals how differently a variety of languages function in their sound systems, their syntaxes, and their lexical denotations and connotations.

The second film, "The Sounds of Language," stresses the importance of intonation and the interference to language learning that comes when a learner whose native language has one system of sound patterns is learning a language with a different system of sound patterns. A class of Americans learning Spanish is used as illustration.

The third film, "The Organization of Language," shows pre-school children discovering how their language functions and learning how to make syntactical generalizations, such as, for example, that you go from one blap to two blaps or from one plose to two ploses or from one throom to two throoms. Or that if I am clooting today, yesterday I clooted, and that a man who cloots is a clooter. In another part of this film a secondary-school class of Americans learning German illustrates how grammatical patterns should be taught.

The fourth film, "Words and their Meaning," shows how seldom is there an exact word-to-word equivalence from one language to another and how the contextual variations in the meaning of a word make it futile and even harmful to learn isolated words in lists. A French class illustrates how words can be well learned only in meaningful contexts.

The fifth and last film, "Modern Techniques in Language Teaching," sums up and reinforces the techniques shown in the first four films by presenting several classes of Puerto Rican children learning English. It also shows the problems of the non-native speaker as language teacher, and how he can overcome his handicap.

Each film is accompanied by workpapers that explain to viewers the principles that underlie the teaching techniques illustrated in the film. An instructor's manual for the whole series was prepared by Theodore Karp, Patricia O'Connor, Professor of Spanish at Brown University, and Betty Wallace Robinett, Professor of English at Ball State University.

Even though this series of films was produced as a non-commercial venture in the interests of the profession, it has had a notable effect on the methodology used in the production of commercial language-learning films here and abroad.

In the five years since the series was produced over 1500 prints have been distributed throughout the world. In the United States and Canada, prints are on deposit in the film libraries of thirty educational centers, which will lend them at nominal cost to schools and colleges. Many school systems have bought sets for the continuing training of in-service teachers. In the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, where cooperation in film production brought the island to the aid of the mainland far beyond the call of duty, the Department of Education and the universities have sets of the films. Sets are distributed abroad through the Cultural Attachés of United States Embassies, the United States Information Service, the Binational Centers,

and the Agency for International Development. The first foreign purchase was made by the British Council. Other foreign owners of sets are the educational departments or ministries of Australia, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Conseil de l'Europe, Dutch Guiana, Great Britain, Greece, Guam, Irak, Iran, Ireland, Lebanon, Israel, Japan, Malaya, the Netherlands, Nigeria, the New Asia College in Hong Kong, New Zealand, Okinawa, Pakistan, the Philippine Center for Language Study, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Republic, and the University College of the West Indies. For this multilingual audience sets of the films have been prepared with magnetic sound track so that teachers using the films may add their own translation and commentary to the optical sound track that is an integral part of the film.

It is impossible to tell how many language students and teachers have seen one or more of these films, but an informed guess would be in the millions. They have been used in almost all of the U.S. government foreign language institutes, and one or more of them has been shown since 1963 at each annual meeting of the MLA and the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Demonstrations of the films have been made at many other important meetings of language teachers, linguists, and laymen in many parts of the world. The films have been adopted on many levels and for many valid objectives. As one example, over a period of two years Educational Testing Service held meetings in over eighty secondary-school systems in the COPE Program (Conferences On Practical Education). These meetings were planned to interest and involve supervisors and administrators in modern methods of language teaching and testing. Film V of the MLA-CAL-TFC Series was used in conjunction with a work kit, a disc recording, and a filmstrip.

The films have been shown on television for purposes ranging from detailed in-service teacher education to presentation by school officials to interested laymen (boards of education, PTAs, and taxpayers) of the need for new techniques in language learning. Those of us who have worked on and with the films have been gratified by the scope and character of their utilization, and by the large number and high quality of the individuals and institutions that have found them useful.

The films may be purchased (at $170.00 each) through Teaching Film Custodians, 25 West 43rd Street, New York City 10036. A current list of rental centers may be obtained from Teaching Film Custodians, 25 West 43rd Street, New York City 10036.

Madison, Connecticut Donald D. Walsh

1. Subsequent supportive production grants made by TFC to MLA raised the initial grant of $80,000 to about $170,000. Sizeable expenditures for committee meetings of language and linguistics specailists and arrangements for production locations were borne by MLA and CAL.